

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2795

TAGS: PINS, SHUM, AR

SUBJ: ARMY ACKNOWLEDGES TIMERMAN'S ARREST

1. FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 15, THE ARGENTINE ARMY ANNOUNCED THE ARREST OF LA OPINION'S PUBLISHER JACOBO TIMERMAN AND SAID THAT HE WAS AT THE DISPOSAL OF MILITARY JUSTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRAIVER CASE.

2. TIMERMAN AND THE NEWSPAPER'S NUMBER TWO MAN, URUGUAYAN-BORN ENRIQUE JARA, WERE TAKEN FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMES IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF APRIL 15. AN ARMED GROUP FIRST REMOVED JARA FROM HIS HOME AND THEN COMPELLED HIM TO DIRECT THEM TO TIMERMAN'S RESIDENCE, WHERE TIMERMAN WAS PLACED UNDER ARREST. THE TERSE ARMY COMMUNIQUE MADE NO MENTION OF JARA, HOWEVER, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL INFORMATION CONCERNING HIS WHEREABOUTS AS OF 1100 HOURS APRIL 16.

3. PRIOR TO THE RELEASE OF THE ARMY COMMUNIQUE, MARIO DIAMENT, THE FOURTH MAN IN THE LA OPINION ENTERPRISE, CALLED AT THE EMBASSY AND CONFIDENTIALLY REQUESTED, IN THE NAME OF THE NEWSPAPER'S MANAGEMENT, THAT PRESIDENT CARTER ISSUE A STATEMENT EXPRESSING CONCERN OF THE US GOVERNMENT OVER THE DISAPPEARANCE OF TIMERMAN AND JARA. THE MANAGEMENT WAS ALARMED OVER THE ABSENCE OF ANY OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDG-
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MENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DETENTION OF THE TWO MEN. IN MAKING THE REQUEST, DIAMENT STATED THAT THE MANAGEMENT'S AIM WAS TO ATTEMPT TO ENSURE FAIR JUDICIAL PROCEDURE AND GUARANTEES FOR TIMERMAN AND JARA WHILE THE AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATED ALLEGED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE NEWSPAPER AND THE GRAIVER FINANCIAL EMPIRE. (DIAMENT ADMITTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN GRAIVER LOANS TO LA OPINION IN THE PAST). DIAMENT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE DETENTIONS MIGHT BE THE

FIRST STEP TOWARDS CLOSING DOWN THE PAPER. HE ALSO THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE AN ANTISEMITIC UNDERCURRENT TO THE GRAIVER INVESTIGATION. NEVERTHELESS, HE SUSPECTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN DEALINGS BETWEEN GRAIVER AND TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS AND THEREFORE REASONABLE CAUSE FOR AN INVESTIGATION.

4. DIAMENT STATED THAT HE HAD ALSO ASKED THE LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE TO OBTAIN STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT IN THE US.

5. ON APRIL 14, THE DAY BEFORE THE ACTION AGAINST TIMERMAN, THE ARMY'S FIRST CORPS ANNOUNCED THE ARREST OF 15 OTHER PERSONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE GRAIVER INVESTIGATION, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF GRAIVER'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY. THE IMPETUS BEHIND THE INVESTIGATION SEEMS TO BE COMING FROM FIRST CORPS COMMANDER GENERAL SUAREZ MASON AND BUENOS AIRES PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR, RETIRED GENERAL IBERICO SAINT JEAN. WHILE THERE MAY BE SOME SUBSTANCE TO THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST GRAIVER, SEVERAL OF OUR USUALLY INFORMED SOURCES BELIEVE THAT THE INVESTIGATION IS PRIMARILY AN ATTEMPT TO SETTLE OLD SCORES ON THE PART OF HARDLINERS IN THE MILITARY AGAINST THOSE WHOM THEY REGARD AS BEING SOFT ON TERRORISM OR LEFTIST. RUMORS HAVE BEEN LEAKED TO THE PRESS THAT THE INVESTIGATION HAS UNCOVERED UNSAVORY LINKS BETWEEN GRAIVER AND EX-PRESIDENT LANUSSE AND OTHER PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS, BUT WE ARE UNCERTAIN AS TO THE MOTIVES AND ULTIMATE TARGETS OF THOSE WHO INITIATED THE INVESTIGATION. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS, NOT YET CONFIRMED, THAT PRESIDENT VIDELA FIRST TRIED, UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO TURN OFF THE INVESTIGATION. HE NOW APPEARS TO BE ATTEMPTING TO GAIN CONTROL OVER THE PROCESS. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, VIDELA ORDERED THE INVESTIGATION CENTRALIZED AND HE

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HAS NAMED ARMY GENERAL BARTOLOME GALLINO TO TAKE CHARGE. WE ASSUME THAT IT IS DUE TO PRESSURES FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE THAT THE ARMY ACKNOWLEDGED TIMERMAN'S DETENTION LAST NIGHT.

6. WE BELIEVE THAT DIAMENT'S REQUEST HAS BEEN LARGELY OVERTAKEN BY THE ARMY'S ADMISSION OF TIMERMAN'S DETENTION. JARA'S DISAPPEARANCE STILL REMAINS UNRESOLVED, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS IN A HIGHLY EXPOSED POSITION SINCE THE JOINT ARREST OF TIMERMAN AND JARA IS NOW PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. I BELIEVE OUR POSITION SHOULD BE NO COMMENT UNTIL FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF THIS IMPORTANT EVENT OCCURS. EMBASSY WILL REPORT ANY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS THIS WEEKEND.

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